



The untimely Death of a Man of GOD lamented.

In a
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the **Funeral** of the Reverend

Mr. John Hancock,

Pastor of the first Church of **CHRIST** in
Braintree;

Who died *May 7th.* 1744.

Ætatis Suae 42.

By **Ebenezer Gay, A. M.**

Pastor of a Church in *Hingham.* K

2 Sam. i. 26. *I am distressed for thee, my Brother Jonathan,
very pleasant hast thou been unto me.*

Luk. 23. 28. *Weep not for me, but weep for your selves,
and for your Children.*

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THE DEATH OF A MAN OF GOD

in a

SERMON

Preached at the Funeral of the Reverend

Mr. John Hancock

Pastor of the Church of Christ in



Who died

Nov. 2nd 1744

By Ebenezer Day, A. M.

Pastor of a Church in Kingston

1. I am distressed for thee, my Brother Jonathan,
every pleasant hour hath been mine.
2. I am distressed for thee, my Brother Jonathan,
every pleasant hour hath been mine.
3. I am distressed for thee, my Brother Jonathan,
every pleasant hour hath been mine.

Printed by S. Kneeland and
J. B. Smith in O. Street, New York.

A Funeral SERMON.

I KINGS xiii. 30. the latter Part.

And they mourned over him, saying, Alas my Brother !

THE Person thus lamented, was a Prophet of the Lord, taken away (it seems) in the midst of his Days, and Serviceableness. He was sent out of *Judab*, to testify God's Displeasure against the Sin of *Jeroboam*, in making the Calves : which he did with great Courage and Fidelity. But by a lying Spirit in the Mouth of an old Prophet at *Bethel*, he was over-perswaded to eat Bread, and drink Water there, contrary to the Commandment of the Lord his God ; for doing this, a Lion met him, as he was returning home-ward, and slew him. The old Prophet that seduced him, hearing of this disastrous Event, which himself had foretold, went boldly, not fearing the Wrath of the King, nor Fury of the Lion, and took the Corpse of the *Man of God*, and brought it into the City, and gave it a decent Interment in his own Grave. His awaken'd Conscience might stimulate him to make this Reparation for the Injury he had done to a Man more righteous than himself. And with this Lamentation, he, and his Sons, and, it may be, others of the City mourned over him, saying, *Alas my Brother !* They express'd a sorrowful Resentment of the untimely Death of so worthy a Person.

Some

Some conceive, these were the first Words of a Funeral-Song, which the old Prophet beginning, the rest followed with a sad Modulation of the Voice. This was according to the usual Manner of bewailing their deceased Friends in those Times, Jer. 22. 18. *Saying, ah my Brother, or, ah Sister: — ah Lord, or ah his Glory.*

The Observation from the Text, may be this, *viz.*

That the untimely Death of a Man of God, a faithful Minister of his Word, should be deeply lamented.

As a Prophet in the old, so a Minister of Christ in the New Testament, is describ'd by this Title, *a Man of God*, 1 Tim. 6. 11. It imports his being especially related to God, appropriated and devoted to him, set apart for him by a peculiar Consecration, distinguish'd by his proper Badge, and employ'd in his particular Business: A Man that is authoris'd & improv'd to declare the Counsel of God, to publish his Will, to denounce his Judgments, and proclaim his Acts of Grace; to manage his Concernments, to negotiate the Affairs of his spiritual Kingdom, and minister in holy Things, is eminently a *Man of God*, and by Way of Excellency is styled, *the Servant of the Lord*: a Minister of his, in a near and constant Attendance upon him; an Officer in his House; his Domestick, as it were, and menial Servant.

Of such a Man it is now to be observed,
1. *That he may die untimely.* A Man of God, however privileg'd and dignify'd by his special Relation to God, is not exempted from Death, the common Lot of Men. He is not in Strength so great, nor Office so high, that he should still live for ever, and not see the Pit. Being a Man of like Passions with others, a Son of Adam, formed out of the Clay, is liable to a
Dissolution,

Diffolution, to Casualties, Diseases and Death with other Men. Zech. 1. 5. *Your Fathers, where are they? and the Prophets, do they live for ever?* Two indeed, *Enoch and Elijah*, who were Prophets, did remove to the World of Spirits, without seeing Death. They "leap'd the Ditch where all the rest of Mankind fall", and drop'd not their Bodies in their ascent to Heaven. God might see fit by these Instances to shew, how Men should have left the World, if they had not sinned, not by Death, but by a Translation; and to give a Glympe of that Life and Immortality, which is brought to Light by the Gospel; of the Glory reserv'd for the Bodies of the Saints, and the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers. Excepting those two privileg'd Men of God, none of the Prophets live for ever, as to their Bodies. *Moses my Servant is dead*, says God, Josh. 1. 2. *And the Prophets are dead*, say the Jews truly, Job. 8. 53. The Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, were not suffered to continue by Reason of Death, Heb. 7. 23. No more are his Ministers of the Gospel. There went out a Saying abroad among the primitive Christian Brethren, that one of the Apostles, namely *John*, the Disciple whom Jesus loved, should not die; yet Jesus said not, *he shall not die: but if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* Joh. 21. 23.

And as Ministers have no more Pretensions to Immortality than their Neighbours, so they have no better Security of long Life. They may die untimely. I don't mean before the Time which God hath appointed unto them; but before they arrive to what is called the full Age of Man: the longest general Period affixed to humane Life. Sometimes God spareth them in the World, as Blessings in it, to a good and great old Age; and they come to the Grave, and to the Garner of Heaven, like as a Shock of Corn cometh in, in his Season. But more frequently are they earlier removed hence; many of them dying young;
many

many in the midst of their Days and Usefulness; in their full Strength, and greatest active Zeal for the Work of the Lord. The Man of God, whose Death is lamented in the Text, seems to have died young. He was most probably many Years Junior to him that beguiled him, the lying Prophet in *Beitbel*, who is called *an old Prophet*. This could not be so old, as *Josephus*, *Jerom*, and others would make him, supposing him to be *Iddo* the Seer, whose Visions against *Jeroboam*, the Son of *Nebat*, are mention'd 2 *Chron.* 9. 29. for that *Iddo* wrote also the Acts of *Abijah*, King of *Judah*, 2 *Chron.* 13. 22. whose Reign did not commence, till the eighteenth Year of *Jeroboam's*; whereas this Prophet died in the Beginning of it, when the solemn Festival was kept in Honour of the newly-erected Golden Calves. I might out of the new Testament instance in a greater than a Prophet, *John Baptist*, who came to an untimely End; was killed by a wicked Ruler, who is as a roaring Lion, when he was not much above thirty Years old. But I need not produce the Bills of Mortality in ancient or later Times, for the Proof of what is now under Consideration. We see that Ministers die untimely, as well as others. Doth not every Year present Experiments of the premature Death of such? The melancholly Instance of it now before our Eyes, calleth us to observe and improve so dark and afflictive a Dispensation of Providence. And upon humble Inquiry into it, we shall find,

I. That God exerciseth his Sovereignty in the untimely Death of a Man, a Minister of his. Tho' God never acts unaccountably, or without highest Reason; yet, being infinitely greater than Man, is not oblig'd to give Account of his Matters: and we may be entirely at a Loss for the Reasons of what he doth. As in this Case. — That one Man, one Minister dies young, in his full Strength of Body and Mind, while another lives to a decrepit old Age, and survives in a great Measure his Usefulness, that the more important,

tant, is the shorter Life, may be past our finding out, and no fit Subject of our critical Discussion ; but to be resolv'd principally into the secret Will, the sovereign Pleasure of the Lord of Life, and glorious Head of the Church. The particular Instance in the Text, may convince us of the Unsearchableness of God's Judgments, and Sovereignty of his Providence. That so good a Man, so faithful a Prophet, should be slain in so terrible a Manner, probably in his Youth, or middle Age, while the Prophet at *Bethel*, who, if he was a true one, was not so bold in God's Cause ; and, if a good Man, yet with a deliberate Lie enticed the other into his Sin, and was more deserving of his Fate, still liv'd, when he was old, in Plenty, and at Ease : That the Lion, which had just kill'd a far better Man, was restrain'd from hurting him, even when he came to take away his Prey ; ----- what an awful Reverence toward the blessed and only Potentate, who worketh all Things according to the Counsel of his Will, may such an Exercise of his high Dominion strike into our Hearts ? *Behold, he taketh away, who can binder him ? who will say unto him, what doest thou ?* † A Minister is a *Man of God* ; and is it not lawful for him to do what he will with his own ? The great God must not be deny'd the common Privilege of all Proprietors and Masters. It is with him to appoint his Servant the Work he should do, and to fix the Time for the Accomplishment of it. Some work twelve Hours ; some nine ; some six ; some three ; and some but one, in the spiritual Vineyard : and he doth no Wrong to any. *It is the Lord ;* (said *Eli*, when God told him there should not be an old Man in his House for ever) *let him do what seemeth him good.* * It becomes all to say so, when the Cause of his shortning the Days of any Minister, or other Man, is not so obvious : It is the Lord, whose Sovereignty is in-

† Job 9. 12. * 1 Sam. 3. 18.

contestible. And the Consideration of it should keep us from judging any Person deceitful & wicked above others, because he died before his Time, or liv'd not out half his Days. We are not to judge of Men by their Sufferings ; nor of Sins by their present Punishments : With some, the Flesh is destroy'd, that the Spirit may be sav'd ; while with others, the Flesh is pamper'd, and the Soul is fitted for Destruction.

Untimely Death is an Event that happens, both to the Righteous and to the Wicked : as is the Good, so is the Sinner in this Respect. In God's Hand is the Breath of all Mankind, and he taketh it away when, and as he pleaseth. Deut. 32. 39. *See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me : I kill, and I make alive : I wound, and I heal : neither is there any that can deliver out of my Hand.* This is a Consideration sufficient, if not to satisfy the Minds of the fondly inquisitive and curious, yet to stop the Mouths of the boldly peremptory and censorious.

2. By Means of the untimely Death of a Servant of God, a Minister of his Word, he manifests his *All-sufficiency*. 2 Cor. 4. 7. *We have this Treasure in earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us.* The Gospel, which is the unsearchable Riches of Christ, is preached unto us by Men who are formed out of the Clay, and soon crumbled into Dust, that the excellent Power, which renders it effectual for the inlightning of blind, quickening of dead, and saving of perishing Souls, might be more conspicuously divine. Since the World began was it not heard, that any Man opened the Eyes of one that was born blind ; yet frail Men are sent, and are sometimes successful, to open the Eyes of the spiritually blind ; and to turn them from Darkness to Light. *Can these dry Bones live ? O Lord God, thou knowest.* We are sure they cannot, barely by their Propheying upon them : *That cannot keep the Breath of Life in their own Nostrils.* And as the excellent Power of God is display'd

display'd in effecting such wonderful Things by the Ministry of weak Men, while they live ; so it is likewise in preserving the precious Treasure that was put into the earthen Vessels, when these are broken by Death. 1 Pet. 1. 24, 25. *All Flesh is as Grass, and all the Glory of Man* (even that Glory of his which sparkleth in the brightest ministerial Gifts) *is as the Flower of Grass ;* (which is more fading, and oftentimes falls sooner than the Grass it self) *the Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away ; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.* Ministers of the Gospel, especially when they are strong in their natural and acquir'd Endowments, and in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus, may (as did James, Cephas, and John) seem to be Pillars†, to bear up the Church, and support Religion in the World : But when such as these are taken down, the Church remains still on the Rock upon which it is built : The Foundation and chief Corner-Stone of it is, a *living Stone*. Christ abideth for ever. When able Ministers of Religion die, Religion dies not with them. God secures to himself a Succession ; and his Work shall not fall to the Ground for want of Hands to carry it on. He sheweth that the Residue and All-sufficiency of the Spirit is with him, according as his divine Power hath given unto us all Things that pertain unto Life and Godliness, thro' the Knowledge of him that hath called us to Glory and Virtue. When God taketh away useful Ministers, in the midst of their Days, and Height of their Serviceableness to the Church, he can, and doth raise up others in their Stead, to go on in his Work, where they broke off : and succeeding Ministers enter into the Labours of the former. He fitteth Instruments for his Work with a great deal of Care ; and when they

† Gal. 2. 9.

are enter'd upon it, or have gain'd Experience in it, and are aptest to it, then he often lays them aside : And we may be tempted to say, *Wherefore hast thou made such Men in vain ?* But he thereby manifests himself to be *all in all* to his People ; and that whatever Instruments he useth, he is not tied to any.

3. In the untimely Death of a Man of God, he may testify his *holy Anger against Sin*. Death always is (and especially when præmature) a Fruit of Sin, and Mark of God's Displeasure against it. By Sin Death entred into the World, and so it continues & reigns. Every Example of it, is an Argument of the Evil and Demerit of Sin, and a Discovery of the Justice of God, in punishing the Transgression of his Law with it.

1. The untimely Death of a Man of God, may be a Testimony of the divine Displeasure at Sin, in the *Man himself*. Not that God's everlasting Love, or Hatred of any Man, is known meerly thereby ; and a peremptory Conclusion concerning a Person's spiritual and final State, can be drawn therefrom. But it may be the Effect and Indication of such a Kind & Degree of righteous Anger for some Offence, as will not be pacified without the Death, as well as Repentance of the Guilty ; of Anger, that kills the Body, tho' it reaches not to the Soul. So was the Death of the Man of God bewailed in the Text. And so might the Death of *Uzzab* be, 2 *Sam.* 6. 6, 7. He might be an honest Levite, and have a good Intention in laying hold on the Ark, tho' he was struck dead therefor, to shew how jealous God is for the Honour of his Name, in Things relating to his Worship ; and to warn others not to treat holy Things with Irreverence.

A Minister may die for *Errors and Miscarriages*, in themselves *smaller* than those, which another Man is *spared in* : and tho' God may forgive him, yet he may justly take such Vengeance of his Inventions. || The

nearer and dearer a Person is unto God, the sooner may he be rebuked by him in this Manner. Præmature Death may be a mixed Cup to him that drinks it. Tho' there may be Mercy in it, as it removes him from impending Calamities; yet there may be Judgment in it, as it is sent for some personal Fault, or sinful Infirmary. Good King *Josiah* was gathered unto his Fathers, to his Grave under forty Years of Age, that his Eyes might not see all the Evil that God would bring upon his People. * And yet how it came to pass that he died so soon, when the Work of Reformation, and the Affairs of his Kingdom call'd for his longer Continuance, we are told, *2 Chron. 35. 22. He hearkened not unto the Words of Necho, from the Mouth of God.* Tho' untimely Death may be brought upon a Man, yea a good Man, and a Man of God, thro' his own Default; yet we must be far from surmising Evil of any one on this Account, and determining this, or the other, real, or supposed, Failing in him, to be testified against by such an Event of Providence. Scripture Instances are given for our Warning, and are not to be taken by us as a Warrant to judge our Brother. *Who art thou that in this Case judgest* (not another Man's, but) *God's Servant? to his own Master he standeth, or falleth.* Nothing is further from my Purpose, than to insinuate any covert undue Reflection upon the Dead, in what is now spoken purely for the Instruction and Admonition of the living.

2. The untimely Death of a Man of God, may be a Testimony of the divine Displeasure at Sin in *others*; especially in those whose Minister he was. This may be a Judgment on a People for their Barrenness under his faithful Care and Cultivations: for their obstinate refusing to hearken to his Voice, God silenceth him by Death; saying, as in *Ezek. 3. 26. Thou shalt be dumb,*

* 2 Kin. 22. 20.

and shalt not be to them a Reprover ; for they are a rebellious House. A Minister may be sinned Young into his Grave by a disobedient People. Their unworthy Entertainment of him, and of the divine Messages delivered by him, may provoke God to take him away from them in the midst of his Days, and not suffer him to stand before him, to speak Good for them, and to turn away his Wrath from them. The Death of One, of whom they are not worthy, may be a Præface of their approaching Calamity ; and to prevent his seeing of it, and sharing in it. 2 Kin. 13. 20. *Elisha died, ---and the Bands of the Moabites invaded the Land.* When the King of Heaven calls home his Ambassador from a People, they ought to fear that War will be proclaim'd against them.

When *Noah*, a Preacher of Righteousness, was hous'd in the Ark, the Deluge came. When a Minister is lodg'd in the Grave, then God's Wrath may be pour'd out on his People, impenitently persisting in their wicked Ways. Ezek. 33. 33. *And when this cometh to pass (so, it will come) then shall they know that a Prophet hath been among them.* For their despising the Youth, scorning the Reproofs, and rejecting the Counsels of a good Minister, People may justly be depriv'd of the Blessing, which his long Life might have been unto them, and be dreadfully punished by an unfaithful Man's coming in his Stead. After the Prophet *Zechariah* had represented the Jews ungrateful Contempt and Abuse of the good Shepherd, he tells us, Chap. 11. ver. 15, 16. *The Lord said unto me, take unto thee yet the Instruments of a foolish Shepherd. For lo, I will raise up a Shepherd in the Land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young One, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still ; but he shall eat the Flesh of the Fat, and tear their Claws in Pieces.* And sometimes People may idolize their Minister, have his Person in Admiration, and be puffed up for him ; and have too raised Expectations from

from him ; looking off from God, may fix their Eyes too earnestly on him, as if by his own Power, or Holiness, he could do Wonders, make the Word preached work effectually in them, and save their Souls. And hereby they may provoke God to take him from them by untimely Death ; removing this Image of Jealousy out of his House. And his Voice to them in such a Dispensation is, *Cease ye from Man, whose Breath is in his Nostrils ; for wherein is he to be accounted of ?* Isai. 2. 22.

Thus we see, how the divine Sovereignty, All-sufficiency, and Justice may be display'd, in the untimely Death of a Man of God.

I proceed,

II. To shew *that such a Death is to be deeply lamented.* The Death of any Man, as it is a natural Evil, and Fruit of moral, is just Reason and Occasion of Sorrow. *Man goeth to his long Home, and the Mourners go about the Streets.* Survivors should be Mourners, and walk humbly as such. A wicked Man's Death is to be lamented for his own Sake, because he that dieth such is undone for ever ; and a Fellow-Creature's Misery should not be made light of. The Death of a righteous Man is to be laid to Heart for the Sake of our selves and others, because One is removed that was a Blessing to those about him : And on every such Occasion it becomes us to pray as in Psal. 12. 1. *Help Lord, for the godly Man ceaseth, for the Faithful fail from among the Children of Men.* For the Death of any Instrument of publick Good we should mourn, because of the common Loss, and the Judgment thereby inflicted on the World. The Death of a Man of God is to be especially lamented, because of his peculiar Relation to God and Men : To God, as his Servant, Steward, and Ambassador ; to Men, as their spiritual Father, and Soul's Friend. He is to be esteemed highly in Love for his
Work's

Work's Sake : and proportionable to the Esteem and Affection we bear toward him, while living, will be our mourning over him, when dead. *Jesus* wept at the Grave of *Lazarus*, Joh. 11. 35, 36. *Then said the Jews, behold how he loved him !* The Death of an aged Man of God is to be lamented ; for it may be a great Loss and Judgment to the World, that needs his Testimony, and Counsel, Example and Prayers. "In many Cases, an old Witness may be of greater Force and Advantage, than ten young ones." *Behold, the Lord of Hosts doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, --- the Prophet, and the Prudent, and the Ancient.* Isai. 3. 1, 2. *Tho' Elisha* was very old, and in the Course of Nature his Life could not be long expected, yet when *Joash* King of Israel visited the Prophet in his last Sickness, he wept over his Face, and said, *O my Father, my Father, the Chariot of Israel, & the Horsemen thereof,* 2 Kin. 13, 14. He lov'd and honour'd the aged dying Prophet, as one of the greatest Blessings to his Kingdom, and Advantages to his prosperous Reign, and lamented the Loss of him, as if he could better spare his Chariots and Men of War, than that Man of God.

But the Death of a young Minister, may, on some Accounts, be Matter of greater Lamentation. If we have Reason to fear, what we should be far from determining, that after he hath preached to others, he is himself a Cast-away, our Concern for his immortal Soul (which is lost, is more miserable than another Man's) will make us regret his untimely Death, because it depriv'd him of further Opportunity of perfecting his Repentance, and assuring his Fidelity. *Nadab* and *Abihu* were newly invested in the Priests Office, when for offering strange Fire before the Lord, Fire from the Lord devoured them. If that Fire transmitted their Souls to everlasting Burnings, (as some, perhaps the most, too peremptorily conclude) if their Spirits were not saved, after their Flesh was destroyed ; (which is more than we can say) 'tho' *Aaron* and his surviving Sons

Sons were not to interrupt the Solemnity and Service of that Day by mourning, and were forbid to shew any Tokens of Sorrow ; yet said *Moses* unto them, Lev. 10. 6. *Let your Brethren, the whole House of Israel, bewail the Burning which the Lord hath kindled, i. e. the burning of those young Men.*--- But if the Minister that dies untimely be a good and faithful Man, we may be call'd to mourn over him more than for the Death of one, who living to a good old Age, his Usefulness was in Appearance much over, his active Work done, his Vigour and Activity both of Body and Mind spent ; who having accomplished his Day of Service, for God and his Generation, doth sleep in Jesus, rest from his Labours, and is blessed in the Reward of 'em. The Death of the former destroys our Hopes, and deprives the World of the Benefit they may have had by the Life of the latter. *Paul*, that had a strong Desire to depart, and be with Christ, was yet content to remain longer in the Body, upon the Prospect of further Serviceableness to the Church, *Phil.* 1. 23. Such a Prospect is intercepted, and wholly cut off, by the untimely Death of a good and faithful Minister. The more needful for us his Abode in the Flesh is, the more sorrowful is our parting with him : The greater is our Loss, the greater the Token of God's Anger in it, and therefore the greater should the Mourning be. People should bewail the untimely Death of their Pastor, which their Sins may have procured, and by which, if they repent not, they are admonished of their Ruin. It becomes them to weep over him, saying, *My Father, my Father !* --- A Glory and Defence of this Place. --- The Ministers of the Lord should lament the Premature Death of a Brother and Companion in Labour ; their Fellow-Worker unto the Kingdom of God, which hath been a Comfort unto them : should mourn over him, saying, *Alas my Brother !*

I M P R O V E M E N T.

I. Hence let every Minister be excited to such a Behaviour of himself, while living, that when he dies, be it untimely, or in a full Age, he may be lamented as a *Man of God* should be. This Honour that is done to a Servant of the Lord at his Death, redounds to the Glory of God, whose Gifts & Graces in him, and Presence with him, made his Life such a Blessing, as that the Extinction, especially the Abbreviation of it, is so much regretted; and therefore it may be an Argument with the truly humble Minister, who seeks only that Christ may be magnified in his Body, whether it be by Life or by Death, so to live, as that he may die lamented; --- lamented as a holy *Man of God*, a good and useful Minister should be. And in order to this, he must labour to be thoroughly furnished unto, and eminently faithful in every good Work, which as a Christian and a Minister he is call'd to the Performance of, 1 Tim. 6. 11. *Thou, O Man of God, flee these Things*, (i.e. youthful Lusts, and the Love of Money, and all other Evils, to which Men are so much bent and addicted) *and follow after Righteousness, Godliness, Faith, Love, Patience, Meekness. Fight the good Fight of Faith, lay hold on eternal Life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good Profession before many Witnesses. --- Keep this Commandment without Spot, unrebukable.*

Bad Ministers die unlamented, for any Loss that the Church sustains by their Removal, tho' in the midst of their Days: but good Ministers have been so manifested in the Consciences of all Men, that their Death has been lamented, even by such as were disobedient to the Word they preached. The *Man of God*, who cried against the Altar at *Bethel*, was abusively treated there. None (as we can find) believed his Words, when he spake in the Name of the Lord.

But

But when he was dead, they mourned over him. By his Death the old Prophet, that wickedly beguiled him into it, and others also, might be reasonably convinced that he was a true Man of God, and that all which he had threatned should surely come to pass. Therefore they paid so much Honour to him at his Burial. This is a small Part of a Prophet's Reward.

II. Is the untimely Death of a Man of God to be deeply lamented? Then all proper Care should be taken by himself and others, that his Life may be prolonged. Gladly indeed should he spend, and be spent for Souls; sparing no Pains, which their Good and Safety requires: neither should he count his Life dear unto himself, so that he may finish his Course with Joy, and the Ministry which he hath received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God. Yet, according to the Importance of his Life, the sixth Commandment requireth of him, and his People, to use all lawful Means to preserve it, and to guard against all natural & moral Causes of shortning Men's Days. He should be wise to Sobriety, and temper his Zeal with Prudence, and not overdo in doing well. Eccl. 7. 16. *Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thy self over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thy self?* People should not lay so great a Burden on him, as is enough to crush him in his full Strength. † They should not expect of him such constant and vehement Preaching, as will soon burn the Bellows, wear out his Lungs, and blaze out the Light of Life into an untimely Period. They may be accessary to his Death, by tempting and drawing him into Sin with them; as was the old Prophet in *Bethel* unto his, lamented in the Text. The *Israelites* by their murmuring angered *Moses*, the Man of God, at the Waters of Strife, so that it went ill with *Moses*

† Deut. 1. 12.

for their Sakes, because they provoked his Spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his Lips, *Psal.* 106. 32, 33. For that hasty Expression of his in *Numb.* 20. 10. *Hear now, ye Rebels, must we fetch Water of this Rock?* God would not let him live to conduct the Israelites into *Canaan*, tho' he earnestly beg'd that he might, and for which Service Age had not render'd him less capable, than ever he had been. For we read, that his Eye was not dim, nor his natural Force abated. * For their Murmurings, a contentious People may be justly punished with the Sin and Death of their Minister. They should endeavour to make his Work as easy and pleasant to him as possible, by letting him see, that he does not labour in vain, nor spend his Strength for nought. *1 Thes.* 3. 7, 8. *Therefore, Brethren, we were comforted over you in all our Affliction and Distress, by your Faith; for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* The Obedience of Faith in the good Conversation of his People, is Life to a faithful Minister, who hath no greater Joy than to see them walking in Truth; but their open Disobedience persisted in, is a Heart-breaking, killing Sorrow to him; and may make him sometimes ready to wish, not only for a lodging Place in the Wilderness, that he might leave his People, and go from them; but even a resting Place in the Grave, where their Wickedness will no more trouble him. *1 Kin.* 19. 4. *Elisba went a Days Journey into the Wilderness, and came and sat down under a Juniper Tree: and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, it is enough, now, O Lord, take away my Life; for I am not better than my Fathers.*

III. The Lords of Hosts, we see, doth this Day call us to weeping and to mourning. --- Tears only might serve for a close of the Sermon on the present

* *Numb.* 27. 14.

Occasion : and the Speaker is prepar'd to pour them forth, rather than Words upon the solemn Assembly. But there is no Need of mine to provoke your's ; nor to call for those who are skilful of Lamentation, to move the Passion of Grief, in the hardest of our Hearts. Who can forbear to mourn the untimely Death of the *Man of God*, whose Funeral we are now attending ? Is there a Person that does not from the bottom of his Heart sigh out the Lamentation over him, *Alas my Brother !* or, *O my Father, my Father ! Ab Lord !* or *ab his Glory !*--- It is the Death of a Prophet, and of the Son of a Prophet, we are bewailing ; of an able Minister of the New Testament, taken away from us in the midst of his Days, and growing Serviceableness ; and at a Season when it seemeth most needful for us, that he should abide still in the Flesh. To be regardless of the Operation of God's Hand in it, and unaffected with Sorrow for it, would argue strange Stupidity in us.

Wherefore, mourn, O ye People of the Lord in this Place, as it becomes you ; and with Agonies of just and pious Grief deplore your Loss of so beloved a Pastor.

The Father of Lights furnish'd him with good Gifts, natural and acquired, for the Work of the Ministry : and he obtained Mercy of the Lord to be faithful in the Exercise of them ; applying himself with great Diligence and Care to all Parts of his Duty.

By the divine Blessing on a sutable Education, he came first among you a Scribe instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven : and he hath ever since, by hard Study and humble Prayer, been increasing his Treasure of Knowledge and Wisdom ; and hath observably shined more and more in his ministerial Accomplishments and Performances, as well as Christian
Graces

Graces and Vertues. His Prayers and Sermons were judiciously compos'd, and gravely utter'd in the Language of holy Scripture, and with a moving Pathos; discovering a large and intimate Acquaintance with the most substantial Things of Religion, and breathing a Spirit of Piety toward God, and of Love to the Souls of Men. O! how fervent and affectionate was he wont to be in addressing Heaven for you, and delivering Messages from thence to you; offering up Prayers and Supplications, both publick and private, with strong Crying and Tears: and exhorting, and comforting, and charging every one of you, as a Father doth his Children: willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also his own Soul, because ye were dear unto him? How faithful and prudent was he as a Steward and Ruler in the House of God, managing the Concernments of this Church, to the Preservation of Peace and good Order among you? As a wise and skilful Pilot hath he steer'd you a right and safe Course, in the late troubled Sea of Ecclesiastical Affairs; guarding you against dangerous Rocks on the one Hand, and on the other; so that you have escaped the Errors and Enthusiasm, which some; and the Infidelity and Indifferency in Matters of Religion, which others have fallen into.

How meekly and humbly hath he demeaned himself toward you? and yet how vigilantly and courageously hath he withstood every Thing which he apprehended was contrary to God's Will, and prejudicial to the Health of Souls? What a real and earnest Concern hath he ever express'd for the Honour of Christ, and your Welfare; exerting the utmost of his Skill, Care and Strength to promote the same? He lov'd and delighted in the Work, to which he was call'd, and his Heart was more intensely engaged upon it, the nearer he was to his finishing of it. He labour'd

labour'd abundantly in Word and Doctrine, in studying and preaching, after bodily Weakness and Pain came upon him ; and when you and others have wish'd him to be more sparing of his Strength. Such a Desire had he to be always about his Master's Business, ministring the Gospel of God to you, as made it grievous unto him, to be taken off from it, or to abate of his active Diligence in it : and the Zeal of God's House might be one Thing that did eat him up.

How bright and engaging an Example was he to the Flock, of a conscientious Regard to whatsoever Things are true, honest, just, pure, praise-worthy, lovely, and of good Report ? Ye are Witnesses, and God also, how holily, and unblameably he behav'd in all manner of Conversation, and every Part of his sacred Function. Doubtless he had his Failings : I'm not describing him as perfect, while in this mortal State ; but I know of none more without Offence than he was in the whole of his pastoral Conduct.

Brethren, You have been remarkable (almost singular) for your steadfast, unshaken Affection to him, in a Day of uncommon Temptation : and we have not heard the least Complaint whisper'd by any of you against him. Whatever Murmurings there have been against Ministers, and Separations from them, in other Places ; your's hath been deservedly much respected and revered, and closely adher'd to by you ; not turning aside from, but strictly observing and following the *Footsteps of the Flock*, and feeding your *Kids beside the Shepherds Tent*. And now, your being bereav'd of a Minister, so highly valu'd by you, must needs be mournfully resented as an unspeakable (we hope not irreparable) Loss to you.

We do weep with you, and for you, O afflicted People, sorrowing that you must see his Face no more.---Alas ! that he whose Voice us'd to be so pleasant and instructive to you from this sacred Desk, must now lie silent in a darksome Coffin before you ! Silent--- did I say ? Being dead, he speaketh ; and preaches this Day an awakening Sermon of Repentance to you.---Hear the Rod, and him that hath appointed it.---Remember how ye have received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent.

Your former Pastor † (whose Memory is precious to you) died, when about the same Age with this now sleeping here in Jesus. O that you may know the meaning of such a repeated sorrowful Bereavement, and comply with the great Design of Providence in it, by the Amendment of your Hearts and Ways ! And our incessant Cries shall be joined with your's to the compassionate Lord Jesus, that ye may not be as Sheep having no Shepherd, scattered abroad in a cloudy and dark Day.

What Consolation in Christ doth the Woman of a sorrowful Spirit now stand in Need of, who was the Desire of the deceased Prophet's Eyes ? Her Grief, tho' silent, must be deep, and will be lasting ; tho' it is not querulous. Should I say unto her, as *Elisba's* Servant did by his Order to the bereaved *Shunamite*, *Is it well with thee ? Is it well with thy Husband ? &c.* || I doubt not but she can Answer, as that pious Woman did, *It is well* : Believing and acknowledging that all that God doth is well.

† The Rev. Mr. *Joseph Marsh*.

|| 2 Kin. 4. 26.

A happy firmness of Mind, not very common to her Sex, to bear the Shock of such a grievous Affliction, with patient Resignation to the Will of God, hath been heretofore observable in her. May it still abide by the Power of divine Grace in her, and with her. God is putting her to the same Trial as formerly: O that there may be the like amiable Expressions of a quiet and submissive Spirit, while she heartily mourns the Death of another of the best of Husbands! *

She will chuse, with meek and humble Penitence to say, *The Lord hath not dealt with me after my Sins*; rather than as the distressed Widow, in *Ruth 1:20.* (lest it should savour of Impatience) *the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.* In him may she trust, and his Comforts delight her Soul.

When we behold the dear & tender Off-spring of the departed Servant of the Lord, do not our Bowels yern over them, to think how good a Father they have lost? How solicitous and skilful a Guide of their Youth? — But with God the *Fatherless* find Mercy: And Men will surely shew Kindness unto these, for their Father's sake. May they all be spared; and there be a Blessing in every one of them! *Psal. 102. 28. The Children of thy Servants shall continue, and their Seed shall be established before thee.*

The Breach made in the afflicted Family is still wider. — Oh! the Bitterness of their Sorrow, who are mourning for their First-born! The aged, venerable Father, and vertuous Mother of the Deceased, had scarce dried their Eyes for the premature Death

* Her first Husband was Mr. Samuel Thaxter of Hingham.

of one of their lovely Sons, * before another is taken away from them. "Breach upon Breach, produces Sorrow upon Sorrow". *Joseph is not, and Simeon is not:----- These Things are against me,* said the good Patriarch *Jacob*. Let not the bereaved Parents say thus, with Respect to these grievous Things which they meet with, and refuse to be comforted. O that their grey Hairs may not be brought down thereby with Sorrow to the Grave! The Burden is heavy for them to bear, with the Infirmities of Age. May God support them! The Comforter only can relieve their Spirits. Their Trials are such as give Occasion for their Faith and Patience to be found unto Honour and Praise.

God hath called for their *Isaacs*, and by resigning them to him in the Faith of *Abram*, they will approve themselves his Son and Daughter, who is the Father of all them that believe. God graciously gave them Sons, which to part with contentedly at his remanding of them, will argue the Strength of their Graces, evidence their superior Love to Christ, their Self-denial, and profound Submission. Shall they not bless the Name of the Lord, who gave, and who hath taken away? Few Parents have such Children to bury: In whose Life there is so much Comfort; and in whose Death there is so great Hope. If their's had been of a more doubtful, or less desirable Character, would they not with *Aaron*, have held their Peace? or, with *Elis*, have said, It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good? Is the Death of

* *Mr. Ebenezer Hancock*, a very ingenious and serious young Man, and well-qualify'd Minister, who served as a Son with his Father in the Gospel, six Years: and died *January 28th 1739. 40.* greatly and universally lamented. *Ætat. 29.*

their

their Sons a Loss, and not a Separation rather for a little Time? *Præmissimus, non Amisimus*, may they say: We have sent them before us, not lost them from us: So *David* comforted himself when his Son was dead, *I shall go to him, but he shall not return unto me.*

May their surviving Children be still great Blessings to them; and left by them such to the World. We heartily sympathise with these in their deep Sorrow, who are now distressed for another Brother, that was very pleasant unto them. May they attend to the loud, repeated Call, given them in Providence, to be also ready.

Let the Ministers of the Lord weep on this mournful Occasion. The associated Pastors of the Vicinity will do so in a special Manner, and always speak of the deceased Man of God in their Lamentations, saying, *Alas, my Brother!* How great a Help and Comfort to us was our dear Fellow-Labourer, who is now called out of the Vineyard? How sweet to us hath been his Conversation! How sound his Advice! How kind his Assistance! How tender his Sympathy with us in our Troubles! Few Brethren in the Ministry have liv'd together in greater Unity than we, (*Behold, how good, and how pleasant it is for all to do so:*) And under God, it hath seem'd to be very much owing to Mr. *Hancock's* excellent Spirit, and earnest Care to keep up ministerial Communion, and preserve brotherly Love. Our Strength is now weakened.--- We have no Man like-minded. Lover and Friend God hath put far from us, and our Acquaintance into Darkness.

The Churches in this Neighbourhood and Land have Cause to lament the Death of One, who affectionately cared for their State; especially, when Disorders were breaking in upon them, and he apprehended

'em in Danger of falling from their Stedfastness, into Error and Confusion. He was a hearty Friend to their Peace and Welfare, and set for the Defence of the Truths, the Ministry, and the Order of the Gospel in them. If any have thought him an Opposer of the Work of God, it was from their Ignorance of it, or him. He was studious to prevent, or rectify Mistakes about it; but as zealous to advance every Thing that really belongs to it. Alas! that he must live no longer to serve the Interest of pure Religion among us. --- Several burning and shining Lights in the spiritual Candlesticks, have lately been put out by Death: Others are clouded with Affliction, and cover'd with Reproach. --- O that we might hear the Voice of the Lord's Controversy with us; and not farther provoke him to remove our *Teachers into Corners*; "the dark Retreats of Death," --- the silent Recesses of the Grave.

Braintree may this Day be called *Bocchim*, a Place of Weepers. All Persons in it, of whatever Rank, or Condition, or Denomination they be, lament the Death of a Man greatly beloved. The Concern which appears in every Face, is a Testimony that he was so, whose Remains we are now committing to the Grave.

As he feared God from his Youth, and feared him greatly, so he had a benevolent Disposition toward Men, and did Good to all as he had Opportunity; to their Bodies, as well as Souls. He was a Lover of Hospitality, and delighted in Works of Mercy. No Man could be truer to his Friend; and it was for want of an Object, not an Inclination, if he did not serve his Enemy. He guided his temporal Affairs with Discretion; and was an Example of Industry and Frugality.

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He walked in his Uprightness, in a steady, uniform Course of godly, righteous and sober Practice. ——— And his End was Peace. Pining Sickness, and Pain (which he bore with admirable Patience) disabled him from conversing much with his Brethren, who visited him after his Confinement to his Chamber and Bed. But what he did speak, was to their Satisfaction and Comfort, that he had the *Hope of the Righteous* in Death: That he had (as he once said unto me, I trust that I have) a good Conscience, and this Testimony of it for his rejoicing, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity he had his Conversation in the World. He was a humble, believing, prayerful Expectant of God's Salvation; and dy'd as he liv'd, looking for the Mercy of the Lord Jesus to eternal Life.

Let us all be excited to follow him, as he followed Christ, that so we may meet in the blessed World, where there is no more Death, and the Days of our Mourning shall be ended.

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THE END